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BY REV. MILTON BADGER,

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FATHERS INVITED INTO THE ARK.

"Come thou and all thy house into the ark."—Genesis vii. 1.

THUS spake God to the patriarch Noah, at a most interesting and solemn crisis. For one hundred and twenty years, the inhabitants of the earth had been warned of coming wrath. Noah, by divine direction, had been engaged in preparing an *ark* for the salvation of all who would believe. His work was now completed, and but seven days yet remained, ere the Lord would break up the fountains of the great deep and open the windows of heaven, and sweep away every living thing from the face of all the earth.

The unbelieving world made light of this warning from heaven. They feared no flood. They desired no refuge from its desolating scourge. There stood the ark of God—an effectual covert from the gathering storm—soon to be closed up, by him that shutteth and no man openeth, and to bear off, upon the wide waste of waters, all that would remain among the living. And yet they would not enter.

At this moment of deep and solemn interest, when all things were fast preparing for the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, a voice from heaven breaks upon the patriarch's ear, saying "*Come thou and all thy house into the ark.*"

The command was addressed to the FATHER OF A FAMILY, and on the manner in which he received and treated it, depended his own salvation for time and for eternity, and on it, too, *might* depend the endless destiny of all his house.

The ark which Noah built, is an emblem of the ark which God has provided in the person of his Son, for the salvation of men from another deluge predicted in his word—a deluge, not of water, but of fire. And I shall consider the text as *the voice of God to EVERY FATHER*

OF A FAMILY who has not entered the ark, Christ Jesus, saying unto him, "*Come thou and all thy house into the ark.*" And I shall offer some considerations to induce every such father to obey, immediately, this voice of God.

I. There is provision in the ark for thee and for all thy house.

You are not required, like Noah, to devote years of labor and sacrifice to preparing for yourself a refuge. The labor has been laid upon God's only son. The sacrifice has been paid in streams of his precious blood. The ark is built and furnished—all things are ready—the door thereof is yet open, and the Spirit and the bride say come. You have only to enter into this building of God, and you escape the indignation which cometh upon the ungodly. You have only to take your children by the hand and lead them in with you, and no evil shall befall *them*, henceforth and forever.

Myriads of households have already entered. There are the families of the patriarchs and of the martyrs, and of the whole army of the faithful. And see we not, in the midst of each, the happy *father*, who taught his children this way of life—whose counsels, whose prayers, and whose bright example brought them within these everlasting doors? With what joy does he look around upon his offspring now! In the eye of each is the peace of heaven. On the heart of each is the image of Jesus. And nothing shall ever separate them from a father's love. O, there are *many such* fathers encircling, with their offspring, the great white throne. And there are many more fast going up to join them. And yet *thou, father*, who art now without, and thy children with thee, there is yet room for thee and for all thine. This day the Savior calls, "*Come, come thou and all thy house.*"

You need not stay without, and not a single child of thine need be excluded. Have you a son who is *hard-hearted* and perverse—whose life is crimsoned with guilt? Bring *him* in with thee. For the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Have you a son who is a *prodigal*—who has wasted his substance with riotous living, and is feeding upon husks and perishing with hunger? Bring *him* in with thee. For his Heavenly Father will fall upon his neck and kiss him, and bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Have you *little children*? O, bring *them* in with thee. For the Savior of the world saith, "*Suffer them to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" Gather *all* thy children with thee into this ark of God, and safely shall you be wafted together into the haven of eternal rest. The ties which bind you so sweetly to each other shall be strengthened; and the kind offices which you perform for each other shall be still higher sources of enjoyment. The happiness you feel in each other's presence—every avenue of parental and filial affection shall be enlarged without measure. Storms may gather over you and rage around you, but not a hair of your heads shall be injured. Thunders may roll and lightnings blaze, but you shall hear in them nought but the voice of your common Father, and see in them nought but the

exceeding brightness of his glory. The earth may quake, the mountains be removed, and every ocean and every sea become a desert—the stars of heaven may be quenched in eternal night, the pillars thereof fall, and one broad flame of unquenchable fire sweep over the whole creation of God, but *you* and *your children* shall come forth out of the vast ruin, borne upward in the hand of Omnipotence, rejoicing with joy unspeakable, that your redemption is accomplished!

II. There is no safety for you or for your children out of the ark.

As God liveth, there is a storm coming which will empty the earth of all her inhabitants. Not one, of all the race of men, can abide the day of its coming, or flee from before its fury. No cavern so deep—no mountain top so high—no island of the ocean so remote as to afford a shelter. No combination of human power—no mighty effort of all the angels of heaven could avert its desolation. There is no safety from it but in the ark of God.

With the children of your love around you, you *may* now feel that you are happy, although you and they are yet without the ark. But your happiness is imperfect; it is of short duration; and it is all at the mercy of God's forbearance. Let the heavens grow dark, the rains descend and the floods come, and it vanisheth like a bubble. The gathering of your children around you, as you and they stand without, with the door shut and the ark borne off upon the rolling flood, will not make you or them happy. *They* will feel that, however kind and indulgent you have been to them, you have neglected their immortal welfare, and that, by listening to your instructions and following your example, they are ruined forever. And *you* will feel that the distress and anguish which are coming upon them, which cannot be mitigated and which will never end, your unfaithfulness has occasioned. O, you will wish, then, to put these objects of your love far from you, and to blot from the registry of Omniscience the day that recorded you as their father!

You may be the most kind-hearted and affectionate of earthly parents, and yet, if you are remaining with your children out of the ark which God has prepared for you, you are doing them an injury which, it *may* be, nothing you *can* hereafter do will be able to repair. Out of Christ, they are unsafe. Out of Christ, no being on earth, and none in heaven, can insure them safety for a single moment. The tender affection which you feel for them, should drive sleep from your eyes and slumber from your eyelids, until you have done all that you *can* do to bring them within the pale of everlasting mercy. You may provide for them the best of instruction—the choicest of earthly comforts; you may secure for them the friendship of the good, the wise, and the great; you may cast upon their prospects in life many a golden beam, and cause their hearts to beat high with expectation. But what of all this can reach beyond the grave? What of all this meets the wants of the soul, or opens the avenues of everlasting life? Re-

remaining with your children out of Christ, you and they are exposed to all the terrors that are written for the enemies of God. Remaining with your children out of Christ, you and they can have no comforter in trouble—no hope in death—no God forever. Remaining with your children out of Christ, you and they must, eventually, become alienated from each other—that which is now the object of your tender affection must become the object of your absolute abhorrence—that which now enkindles hope must give intensity to the agonies of despair!

O, there is *reason* why God out of heaven should call to thee, to-day, saying, "Come *thou* and all thy house into the ark;" for out of it, there is no safety for thee or thine. No guardian angels, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, watch around *thy* dwelling. No gracious Savior, attracted to thy threshold by thy song of praise, and the accents of thy broken and contrite heart, unsheaths the sword of his omnipotence for *thy* defence. No covenant-keeping God has pledged the faithfulness of his throne, that when *thou* walkest through the fire he will be with thee, and through the waters they shall not overflow thee. Thy house is not a house of prayer. The mercy that spares thee is all uncovenanted. The promises of God reach not to thee or thine. And it is not for *thy* sake that he blesses thee or thine. His *earth* yields thee her increase, but to reprove thee of thine ingratitude. His *heavens* smile upon thee, but to remind thee of the benignity of him whom thou dost not love. His *air* breathes upon thee, but to roll upon thee a mountain's weight of obligation to consecrate thyself and all thou hast to him, in whose hand thy breath is. And the *immortal beings*, whom he has drawn around thee and taught to call thee, *father*, place their affections on thee, and rejoice to do thy pleasure, only to teach thee with what feelings thou shouldst look upon the character and do the will of thy father and their father who is in heaven. None of these things are—no earthly blessings can be sources of permanent enjoyment. To be happy, even in the affections of your family, and in view of your and their immortal destination, and to be assured that this happiness will be any thing but momentary in its duration, you must obey the voice of God, and come, *thou* and all thy house, into the ark.

III. You should enter the ark of God, and seek to bring all your children in with you, not only because *your* salvation depends upon it, but because it may be indispensable to *theirs*.

1. Your children, that are out of the ark of God, are unwilling to believe that there is a storm gathering, or that the ground on which they stand will be swept by the overwhelming tide. They are unwilling to believe that the ark is a place of safety, or that there are not other plans equally safe, and altogether more desirable. Now, who could *convince* them of their error, like *you*, their father? What teacher could reason with them so irresistibly? What minister plead with them so affectionately? *You*, they respect. *You*, they love. To

you, they are bound by chords which bind them to none else. *Your* counsels they will not utterly disregard. *Your* persuasions they cannot absolutely resist. Should you call them around you, and take them by the hand, and out of the fullness of your heart, tell them their condition, point out to them their danger, and beg them to flee from the wrath to come; should you tell them, how precious the Saviour is to *you*—how anxious you are to meet them all in heaven, and how painful is the thought of an eternal separation between you and them at the judgment seat of Christ, think you they would hear it unmoved? Can you say, by experience, that they would? Have you ever made the experiment? Have you ever told your children that they had sinned against God—that they were justly condemned to eternal death—that they must repent of all their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or perish forever? Have you ever told them of the deceitfulness and the desperate depravity of their hearts—of the holiness of God—of the bliss of heaven and of the pains of hell? Have you ever cautioned them against resisting the Holy Ghost? Have you ever admonished them that their life is a vapor, and entreated them to do with their might the great work which God has given them to do? Have you *done* this, and done it *repeatedly*, and done it in all the *fervor* of parental affection? And why not? You have taught your children how they should feel toward their fellow men, and how they should conduct themselves in their presence. Why not teach them how they should feel towards God, and what reverence they should render to him? You have taught them how to live in this world, why not teach them how to live forever? The body you have been solicitous to nurture and to adorn. O, why treat with so much indifference the undying soul? Had *your* instructions—your entreaties been added to those which your children have already received from others, they *might*, long since, have been heirs of life. It *may be*, that all the argument and the persuasion, which teachers and ministers and parents united can bring to bear upon the hearts and consciences of your children, will be but just able to bring them within the kingdom of God; and that, if you substract yours, all other influences will fail, and they will die in their sins. IT MAY BE! Will you not, then, reason with them, and plead with them, by all the ties which bind them to your souls? Do you say, that you are not prepared to do this?—that you have no heart to do it? Well, this is a melancholy confession. Not prepared—no heart to speak to your dear child about his having a part in the book of life! This is the very reason why we urge upon you the command in the text. “Come thou—and all thy house—into the ark.” We wish to have you prepared. We wish you to enter the ark to-day, that you may teach your children to enter it also. We wish you to seek the Lord while he may be found, that your children may find him also.

2. Again; your children need an *almighty arm* thrown around them, to gather them out of the snares and temptations of the world, into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. They need to have the Holy Spirit poured out upon them, that they may be convinced of sin and

of a judgment to come and be humbled at the foot of the cross. And who shall come with strong *supplications* and with tears to the mercy seat for this blessing, if not their *father*? If a child of yours were condemned to be executed on the morrow, who could be expected to plead with the executive of the state in his behalf like his own father? And who can be expected to wrestle at the throne of grace for the *endless* life of your offspring, like him, whose image they bear and to whom they are dearer than his own heart's blood? O, it is *parental prayer*, that has had such power with God in perpetuating the blessings of his grace upon the seed of the righteous. It is parental prayer, that has brought multitudes of children and youth to the feet of Jesus. It is parental prayer, that has often been answered on earth, to the praise of the riches of God's grace, long after the spirit that had breathed it out before heaven had gone to its everlasting rest. But, *thou*, who art a *father*, and art thyself out of the ark of safety, hast thou prayed for thy children? Hast thou *asked* of God that thou *mightest* meet them all in heaven? Hast thou taken them into thy closet, and told them the desires of thy heart, and lifted up the voice of thy supplication over them? Hast thou brought them around the family altar, and there taught them to offer incense unto God? And *why* hast thou not *done* it? Thou hast not hesitated to ask favors for thy children of thy fellow-men. Why hast thou asked none for them of thy God? *Hadst* thou prayed with them, and prayed *for* them, each morning and evening, from their infancy up to this hour; and hadst thou often taken them with thee into thy secret chamber, thy Father, who seeth in secret, might, long since, have rewarded thee openly. He might have given thee to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. It *may be*, that all the instructions, and warnings, and admonitions, which they have hitherto received, have failed of bringing them to the Redeemer, because you have never asked God's blessing on these means of grace. It *may be*, that all the means of grace which shall hereafter be used with them, will be utterly powerless, because there will not be added to these influences the influence of your prayers. It *may be*, that a single word of prayer, ascending from your lips, will be the means, in God's hands, of prostrating them in penitence before his throne. If so, your entering the ark of God, and entering it speedily, may be connected with blessings on your offspring, great as God's mercy can bestow, and lasting as the pillars of his throne.

3. Again; your children need the influence of *example*, as well as of instruction and prayer, to induce them to seek first the kingdom of heaven. And whose example can exert such an influence upon them as that of their father? How can you *expect* them to flee from the wrath to come, when you, by your example, teach them that there is no coming wrath. How can you expect that *they* will trust themselves to the mercy of Christ, while you, by your conduct, teach them that *you* feel no need of that mercy. *You* live without Christ. *You* neglect religion. *You* cast off fear and restrain prayer. Is it any wonder

if your children do the same. If Noah had refused to enter the ark when God commanded him, think ye his children would have entered it? If their father had felt that there was no flood of waters coming upon the earth, think ye they would have been looking for windows in heaven? If their father had felt that it was hazardous to intrust his life in that frail bark, think ye they would have launched forth in it upon the angry deep? And if *you* disregard the calls of mercy, and resist the Holy Ghost, and die unreconciled to God, what reason have you to expect that your dear children will listen to those calls, and yield their hearts to that influence, and die in hope of a blessed immortality? You wish them to die thus. We know that you do, for your's is the heart of a father. But, what hope have you that they will? What a hindrance has your evil example been to them already! How often, when the ministers of Christ have told them of their danger, and held up before them the bleeding victim of the cross, and urged them to look at it and live forever, how often have they said within themselves, "If these things *were so*, my father would not utterly disregard them. He perceives no danger. He does not believe that he must repent or perish—that he must be born again or be forever excluded from the kingdom of heaven. He does not believe it, and why should I?" And is not this good logic? And do you not respect the intellect of your child for it, unacquainted, as he yet is, with the mysterious workings of human depravity? O, how much instruction falls as water upon the ground—how much divine influence is as ineffectual as if exerted upon a rock, and solely, because the lesson taught by parental example is so unlike that which is written in the book of God. It *may be*, that if the *example* of that father, who is now unreconciled to God, had been added to the other influences which have been exerted upon his children, they would, one and all, have become the children of the Most High. It *may be*, that if the example of that father is *not* brought to bear upon his children, all the preaching, and the prayers, and the influences of the Divine Spirit that will ever reach them, will come very far short of humbling them at the foot of the cross. It *may be*, that the example of that father alone, if no other means were ever to be repeated, would be sufficient, under God, to turn the feet of all his children unto the wisdom of the just. If so, his entering the ark of God, and entering without delay, may be of more consequence to them than to come into possession of all the worlds that Omnipotence has made.

And wilt thou, who art a father, in view of these considerations, hesitate whether thou shalt enter the ark of God? If thou hast no mercy upon thine own soul, wilt thou have none upon the souls of thy children? They are bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh. They are entrusted to thy care. Their Maker and thine has enjoined it upon thee, to take care of their souls. They *need* your most faithful instructions. They need your most fervent prayers. They need the influence of your pious example. And will you not regard their ne-

cessities? You would not deny them the meat that perisheth. Will you deny them that which endureth unto everlasting life? You would not refuse to ask a physician to come to their relief, if they were lying upon the bed of death. You could not find it in your heart to do it. And will you refuse to send up one request, in their behalf, to the great Physician of souls? You are a father. You look upon the face of your offspring with tenderness and affection. You can be moved by a regard to their everlasting well being. Will you not, this day, then, gather around you those objects of your love, whose eternal welfare you have hitherto neglected, and open before them the book of the testimony and read to them of Jesus and the resurrection. Will you not tell them of their ruined state—of a Savior's dying love—of an accepted time and a day of salvation? *Ought* you not to do it? Can you neglect it, and your own conscience not reproach you? Should you do it, would it not be likely to arrest their attention and make a deep impression on their hearts? Would it not be likely to have more influence with them than all the sermons they have ever heard?

And will you not do more than this? Will you not, this day, take those children with you into your closet, and bend your knee before your Maker, and confess to him, in their presence, that you have neglected your duty—neglected your own soul and theirs—that you have not instructed them, nor warned them, nor prayed for them—but have been leading them, by your example, in the broad road of death—that it is infinite mercy that has spared you, and permitted you to come with them now to the throne of grace, and that, henceforth, it shall be your great work to train them up for heaven. *Ought* you not to do this? Can you neglect it, and your own conscience not upbraid you? Would not the influence of it, on your own soul and on the souls of your children, be such as you would delight to have come to your remembrance in the great day? You *ought* to do all this, and more. God has enjoined it upon you, and the obligation can never be diminished—can never be cast off. You have become, in the providence of God, a father. And the responsibilities involved in this relation, you must carry with you to your grave and to the judgment seat of God.

If you are not prepared to do all your duties to your household, seek that preparation without delay. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. You may seek him now, while he yet invites you to his mercy seat. You may find him the Lord God, gracious and merciful. You may go from the altar of prayer and self-consecration, *prepared* to begin every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring. And why not do it? Why wait? Time does not wait, but bears thee and thine on to the judgment. The angel of death does not wait, but flies swiftly, to execute his commission. The Holy Spirit will not wait, but may, ere long, depart and return no more. And you and your children, *where are you then?* Will you longer bar the Savior from your heart and thus exclude him from your house? Will you neither enter his kingdom yourself, nor suffer your dear children to enter? You *ought* not to trifle

thus with your obligations to God, nor with those tender ties which bind you to your household. God has constituted you a minister of his grace, in your own house. And however unmindful you may have been of your ministry—however neglectful of its duties, you are held responsible to the great tribunal, for making your house a house of prayer and for teaching all within it, by your precepts and your example, to offer incense holy and acceptable unto God. No blessing can you be instrumental of conferring upon your household, that may be compared with this. Nothing can you do for them, that you will think of with more satisfaction, as you pass on your pilgrimage—nothing that will give you more consolation in your dying moments, or fill your soul and theirs with purer, intenser joy, as you greet each other in the presence of your final judge!

What must be the distress of a father, summoned to the death bed of an *unconverted son*, there to feel, that his neglected duties and his ruinous example have hardened his own son in impenitency, and blotted out his hope of heaven! Now, the afflicted father wrings his hands, and weeps, and prays, and warns, and watches for some signal of a broken heart. But the son regards not his entreaties. They have come *too late*. As he lived, so he dies. And over the mortal body, from which the immortal spirit has gone up to God—not there to dwell—the father, convulsed with anguish, cries, “O, my son, *my son*, MY SON! Would God I had died for thee! O, my son, *my son*, MY SON!” Would you never know, by your own experience, the agonies which rend that father’s heart, begin, O, *begin* every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. *Come THOU and all thy house into the ark.*

Or, think of an *unconverted father* laid, at an unexpected moment, on his dying bed. His children come around him. But what thorns does it plant in his pillow, what gloom does it bring over his entrance into the world of spirits, to reflect that he has neglected their salvation! He has uttered no warning voice. He has breathed no unutterable desire to heaven. The morning and the evening incense has never gone up from his dwelling to God. And now it is *too late*. All that he can now do for his impenitent children, is just to give them one parting admonition. And then he must leave them, in a world of temptation and sin, to go away and give up his account. O, the anguish of waking up, at such a moment as this, to the recollection of neglected duties—an abused offspring—a hopeless eternity!—Would you never know this anguish, by your own experience, begin, O, *begin* every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. *Come THOU and all thy house into the ark.*

But there are scenes more heart-rending than these—scenes *beyond* a death-bed. The *unfaithful father* must meet his ruined children at the bar of God. O, what an interview that! The children of his loins—the objects of his tenderest affection, upbraid him, and say, “Thou wast our father. To thee was committed the care of our souls.

But thou caredst not for them. We never heard thee speak to us of repentance or of a Savior's cross—of this judgment bar or of the weeping and wailing that now await us. *Our souls are lost*—and LOST through your neglect! Hadst thou been faithful to us, we might now have stood together at Christ's right hand. *We might have sung the song of Moses and the Lamb.*" O, what must be the condition of a father, thus doomed, through everlasting ages, to hear the imprecations and reproaches of his own offspring, and to have them all echoed back from his own upbraiding conscience? Would you be saved from such a doom, begin, O, *begin every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. Come THOU and all thy house into the ark.*

Or turn, for a moment, to a different scene. Methinks I see, at the right hand of the eternal throne, a *father in glory*, and all his children are glorified spirits around him. They rise up and with united voice call him blessed. "We remember," say they, "our dwelling on yonder earth, consecrated by thy piety and thy prayers, as the house of God and the gate of heaven. There, thou didst watch over our infancy, and guide us up to manhood. We knelt by thy side at the altar of prayer, and walked by thy side to the assembly of the saints. Thy faithful counsels, thine affectionate solicitude, thy fervent prayers, brought down upon us the blessing of our God. And now, with our robes made white in the blood of the Lamb, we stand upon these heights of Zion to acknowledge thee, our father, as the instrument, under God, of our immortal joy." What tongue can describe, what heart conceive the blessedness of such a father! Would you make that blessedness your own, begin, O, *begin every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. Come THOU and all thy house into the ark.* Fathers, I speak to you. And I speak in behalf of your own soul and the souls of your dear children. Judge ye what I say.

SERMON CCCXLVI.

(AN OUTLINE.*)

BY REV. WILLIAM B. LEWIS,

PASTOR OF THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

WHY SHOULD THE WORK CEASE ?

"And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down : why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you ?"—Nehemiah vi. 3.

As Nehemiah, with his faithful Jews, "builted the wall of the city," he was invited by Sanballat and others, to a consultation upon public matters. Their designs, he had occasion to know, were unfriendly. Perhaps they intended, after alluring him into the plain, to lay violent hands upon him. They certainly meant to put a stop to the repairs. And the very least evil that could result, would be the suspension of the work during his absence.

So he declines a conference. At once, Sanballat repeats the proposal ; but with as little success. Four different times, messengers come soliciting an interview : and in each instance, Nehemiah replies, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down : why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you ?

In applying the text to ourselves, as engaged in a revival of religion, I propose the following inquiries.

I. In what respects is this a *great work* ?

It is such, as it requires great effort—demands the power of God—is carried on against great opposition, a mighty adversary, with his servants and abettors—reaps blessed results, the quickening of christians, the conversion of sinners, and the praise of divine grace—and,

* The Editor having heard the author preach to his own people from this outline, requested a copy for publication. It was during a revival, in which more than one hundred souls have been hopefully converted, in connection almost exclusively with the united efforts of the pastor and church, which still continues after three months progress.

because perverted or unimproved, contributes to painful results, the hardening of the hearts and the aggravated ruin of multitudes.

II. In what respects are we doing this great work ?

We are not to forget that the efficiency is God's. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. It is one of the chief delights of the christian in a revival, to *feel*, and to *say*, "Lo, THIS IS OUR GOD!" To exalt the Holy Spirit! To magnify His office, and His work.

Yet in some important respects, we do this work. For, *we use the means of its advancement.*

We preach the word,—frequently, plainly, and with adaptation to the season, and to the numerous classes which the season occasions. In the inquiry-meeting, and from house to house, we confer with the troubled soul; explain to him the way of God more fully; expose his errors; answer his excuses; resolve his doubts; reduce to order his confused thoughts and mingled feelings; and, divesting the subject in hand of all that does not properly belong to it, simplify his duty, and enforce it upon his conscience.

We bring the unconverted to the house of God—all who love their souls can do this—and endeavor to place them under all the means of grace. By evincing an affectionate interest, we encourage them to seek their salvation. We take them by the hand, when impressed, point them to the Savior, and show that "the elder brother" can favor the return and pardon of "the prodigal."

We pray for them. This we do, in public and in secret; in their presence, and also where they hear it not, and when they know it not.

III. What, in the course of a revival, is to be guarded against, as likely to cause the work to cease ?

PAST SUCCESS. Christians count the converted; pronounce on the power and extent of the work; congratulate themselves and each other; and are satisfied.

UNBELIEF. The idea obtains, that God will not save many in so small a congregation; or in a congregation where the proportion of the unconverted is so small; or without more preaching; or without more powerful or exciting preaching; or with the measures employed. As many have been converted, as in the circumstances, could be expected.

DISCOURAGEMENT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO REMAIN UN-CONVERTED. There are but few of them; or they are too hardened; or they are as yet little impressed; or they have passed through many revivals; or they are fast bound in error; or they make bitter opposition; or they plead so many excuses.

WEARINESS, from continuing in an uniform and absorbing work. The spirit—not merely because the flesh is weak—grows restless. A change is desired: some new excitement, or at least some relaxation.

A DIMINUTION OF ATTENDANCE UPON THE HOUSE OF GOD. The influence of the mere presence of each member of the church, is mighty. The influence of his absence, mightier still. His absence, if unnecessary, discourages the preacher, and is a comment upon the work of God which sinners easily read. Yet a dropping off, in the attendance of professors of religion, is not uncommon. Many of them *begin* the revival-season well. They come to the *first* prayer-meetings. They hear the *first* sermons. Their goodness is a morning cloud; and as the early dew it goeth away.

WORLDLY BUSINESS. It is a hard lesson for christians to learn that *their business* is God's, if such that they have a right to pursue it; and that *God's work* is theirs. They are not the proprietors of their worldly concerns, but only agents. If the Proprietor *calls us off*, and by his providence and Spirit points us to the revival, as the scene of chief labor for the present, there we must be. While such is the indication, there we must stay:—only caring meanwhile that *His other business* takes no harm. When the members of the church "cannot afford time from business," the work is likely to cease.

WORLDLY COMPANY. When christians go again for their happiness, into circles where religion is not ascendant, or court or admit the attentions of the irreligious and the gay—it is saying decisively that we have no further occasion for the company of the Holy Spirit.

HABITUAL AND EASILY BESETTING SINS. The first step, on engaging in a revival, is to part with these. If they are resumed, the work ceases. Too often, the christian has not *slain* his sins; nor was it his calculation to slay them. He only *laid them by*; to take them up, perhaps with new zest.

OUR SELFISH ENDS ANSWERED. Numbers and strength have been added to the church. My own *house* has shared in the blessing. I have received a new impulse: it has been a season of comfort to my soul; my doubts and darkness are scattered; my backslidings healed. My child, my husband, or my parent has been saved.

These are blessed results. But ends no higher, no larger, are selfish; and if we rest when they are gained, the work will cease. Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, but FOR MY HOLY NAME'S SAKE.

A VAGUE IMPRESSION THAT THE WORK WILL GO ON. If the idea obtains, that the preaching is good; the preacher wise and successful; the church humble and prayerful; the congregation deeply moved; the Spirit powerfully operating;—and therefore, irrespectively of the part individuals may act, the work will advance, it is likely to cease.

PRAYER INTERMITTED. Exalt God less; recognize, *realize* less, your entire dependence on the Almighty Spirit; let prayer flag in the closet, prayer-meetings become thin and lifeless, and the conviction less fixed and less *felt*, that this work advances only as GOD IS HERE,—and the work will cease: IT HAS CEASED.

IV. Why should this work NOT CEASE ?

THE WORK HONORS GOD. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. It is in transforming the sinful heart, and in training his child for his service and kingdom, that God best displays his glory. When, by the outpouring of his Spirit, he multiplies these results, as the drops of dew, or the leaves of spring, it is the brightest view of grace, that earth, or heaven, knows.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD. He speaks much of times of visitation, and of refreshing from his presence : and insists that his people shall improve them. "A present God is all our strength, and all our joy and hope." Wo to them when I depart from them !

THE PROMISES OF GOD. Many, varied, full, sincere, exceeding great and precious. Often tested, and never known to fail.

THE NUMBER ALREADY CONVERTED. That this has been considerable, should only prompt to greater desire and effort. It is so in other things : to have, is to desire more,—success gives birth to enterprise. Why not in the case of the best of blessings :—and on the part of their Giver, untold resources, a warm heart, and the most encouraging offers ?

THE ESTABLISHING OF CONVERTS. No school for them like a revival; the revival in which they were born. Let them learn here, the elements of truth, the guidance and witness of the Spirit, the source of their strength, the blessedness of bringing others to Jesus. Let him that heareth, say Come. The conversion of the convert is not his last step, but his first. Let these happy influences remain about him, till he shall have taken many a manly stride.

IT IS A DELIGHTFUL WORK. It is drawing from the richest fount of joy in the sanctified heart ; since "it is more blessed to give than to receive." It is mingling with our friends in the scene of their overflowing love, their first real happiness. It is sympathy, in desire and employment and the delights of success, with the Savior !

THE INFLUENCE OF THIS WORK, ON OTHER CHURCHES. It is a token for good, a hold upon heaven, when the Spirit is operating in a neighboring church. The hope is, that the happy contagion will reach us : that God, who has come so nigh, will favor our Zion. Praying ones are encouraged to cry, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for us ? Bless us, even us also, O our Father !

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL. With its immortal nature ; its deep affections ; its ever enlarging capacities for bliss, or for woe ; its ransom, no less than "the precious blood of Christ,"—the soul is to be converted, or lost ; and that soon !

THE NUMBER OF THE UNCONVERTED. Many are "anxious"; many evince earlier stages of sensibility ; many are unawakened.

THE CHARACTER OF THE UNCONVERTED. It may be that they are "the hardened," "those who have passed through many revivals," and "the opposers." They have indeed withstood powerful influences, these many days. But shall the work for this reason cease, and the Spirit be withdrawn, and these be left to *certain death* ?

THE NEARNESS OF MANY TO OURSELVES. By blood, and by strong

affection, they are dear to us. We love them, as our own souls. All the close relationships of life are here. And can we deliberately concur in separations which now exist; and which, remaining to the close of this work, are so likely to exist forever? Could we all agree to-day, *where* this revival shall stop,—which of our houses it shall not enter?

THE INFLUENCE THAT THE CONVERSION OF A SOUL MAY SET IN MOTION. The conversion of a layman, Page, is supposed to have resulted in the direct conversion of one hundred others. To how many more, God blessed his influence, in life, in death, and now, when being dead, he yet speaketh, will not be known on earth. How many more might have been converted through the labors of that useful man, but for his early departure, it is impossible to conjecture. But suppose his labors blessed in the saving of one hundred,—nay of fifty souls. Suppose each one of those, or half of them, possessed of his zeal and his faith, and instrumental in the conversion, each one of many more. And they, in their turn; and so on, till time shall end,—“the circles widening as they recede.”

Suppose a young man converted, who becomes educated, and preaches the gospel. In connection with his labors, it pleases God to save many hundreds. Of these, many inherit the spirit of self-denying labor for the cause of the Redeemer. Not a few become preachers: some, missionaries of the cross. Many a mother, among those converts, now begins to train her children for heaven. Many of the youth, in after life are parents, and train their children for God. Who can calculate the influence of the conversion of that young man? And if one such trophy may be secured to the Savior in this revival; or one person saved, who shall accomplish a fraction of that good,—why should the work cease?

Finally, if the work ceases, it is that we “GO DOWN” AGAIN INTO CARELESSNESS AND SIN. The close of a revival is as sad, as its commencement is happy. The church laying down their watch, and relaxing their effort and prayer, and the irreligious falling into indifference, must compensate the adversary it would seem for the inroads he has suffered. Shall this be? Can we bear the thought?

V. How may we secure the continuance of the work?

Continue all that we have done, to invite the presence of the Spirit; and to promote the work. Abandon all that may have hindered its more powerful progress. Cherish your interest in the revival. Be present amid its moving scenes. Learn within those walls, how little is the world; how valuable is the soul; how great is God! Be humble; be watchful; be solemn; be prayerful.

If you have withheld your presence, and your hearty co-operation; repent. *Now* throw yourself into the work. Show that you have enough religion, enough sympathy with the Savior, enough regard for the souls of men, to concur in the saving operations of the Spirit.

If you cannot show this:—if *it is not so*: then inquire into your own standing before God. Inquire whether there is not the first and best of reasons, why you, you should enter into this work: whether this revival may not have been sent to rescue *one at least* from a state as fearful as avowed impenitence!

It only remains, therefore, that we press onward. I seem to hear that cheering order, Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. Tire not. Let your trust be in God. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse. Lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left. Thus the work shall not cease. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him."

SERMON CCCXLVII.

EXCUSES FOR NOT BEING A CHRISTIAN.

"I pray thee have me excused."—Luke xiv: 18.

"MANY and various are the excuses which men plead for neglecting religion when its importance is pressed on their attention. All have some excuse, but among them all there is not one which is valid now, or which will prove well grounded in the day of judgment. Some of the excuses which are urged are indeed very deceptive. It is not uncommon to hear individuals say "I wish I were a christian, but I do not know how to become one." Impossible. To wish to be a christian, and actually to be one, are the same thing. Still many persons use this language, "I wish I were a christian but do not know how to become one;" and this discourse is designed to show you, my hearer, not how to gratify your supposed wish, but to show you that if you are not a christian, you have, in fact, no wish to become one. There are reasons why you have not; which, though they are sometimes expressed, oftener lie coiled up secretly in the heart, and are only perceived when they are distinctly pointed out. Some of these will be brought to view in this discourse; and the hearer, while he considers them, should carefully inquire whether he is not himself under the influence of them; so as, in fact, not to wish to be a christian; so that, though he may wish for the safety and the happiness which he imagines piety would bring, he does not really wish for the reign of piety itself in his heart.

I. *I am too young to attend to religion.*—Some have a secret feeling, that they are so young, that it is not necessary for them to attend to

religion. You may regard religion as very suitable for those who are advanced in life, and especially for the aged and the dying; but the world and its pleasures appear so bright and alluring, that you think it hardly reasonable to expect that you will give them up at present. You cannot attend to religion now. But, consider carefully, for a moment, the import of this language. What is it to *attend to religion*? It is to obey God. God commands you to remember now your Creator, in the days of your youth; to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. He commandeth all men every where to repent; and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. These commands are not addressed to the old exclusively, but to all, and *more especially* to the young; because there are peculiar promises and encouragements held out to those who seek God early. To *attend to religion* in a proper manner, is nothing more or less than to obey these commands. To neglect religion, is to disobey these commands. Those, who repent of their sins, believe in Christ, give him their hearts, and devote themselves to his service—those, and those only, attend to religion in a manner that is acceptable to God. This is religion, and there is nothing else that deserves the name. Those, on the contrary, neglect religion, who live impenitent, slight the invitations of Christ, pursue the pleasures of the world, doing more to please themselves and their fellow-men, than they do to please God.

Now look at your excuse. You may perhaps understand it better. *Too young to attend to religion*;—that is, too young to obey the God that made you, and on whom you are dependent for every breath you draw. Too young to love and serve the God of heaven! Are you not, on the other hand, too young to be without religion—to disobey God—to set yourselves in opposition to the Most High—to say to the Lord Jesus, who died to redeem you,—I will not have this man to reign over me? Is it well for the young and tender youth to assume an attitude like this? God says, ‘My son—my daughter, give me thine heart.’ When does he command you to do this? to-morrow?—or next week?—or next year?—or when you have arrived to old age? No,—he commands you to do it to-day. You cannot then neglect religion, without directly disobeying this command of the most high God. And does the circumstance that you are young, furnish a good reason why you should do this? Put your excuse into plain language, and see how it will sound. I am young,—therefore I will disobey God; I will set his authority at defiance; I will seek my happiness in the world, instead of seeking it in his service. And though the Savior, who has died for my redemption, follows me with his earnest and pressing invitations, I will slight them all; I will neglect his great salvation.—Would you be willing deliberately to adopt language like this? But this is the real import of your language, when you say you are too young to attend to religion.

Consider again; are you too young to die? Have you never

seen any one, no older than yourself, borne to the cold grave? Should your soul this night be required of you, would you dare to make the plea at the bar, to which you would be summoned, that you thought yourself too young to attend to religion? Is this excuse a good one?

II. *Pressure of worldly cares.*—Others who say they wish to become Christians, secretly excuse themselves on account of the pressure of worldly cares. This is in reality their excuse for neglecting religion. Among those, who were bidden to the great supper, one said, I have bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And many are excusing themselves on no better ground, for not accepting the invitation of Christ. *They have not time to attend to religion.*—Do look at this excuse. What is religion? It is to love God with all the heart. Will it take any more time to love God than it does to hate him? What is necessary in order that you may become reconciled to God? To repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And how much time is necessary to do this? How long did it take the Jailer, or the Eunuch, or Saul of Tarsus to believe in Christ? How long ought it to take to make up your mind, whether you will obey God or disobey him? whether you will have your portion in heaven or in hell? And when you have made the decision, will it take any longer to perform the ordinary duties of life under the influence of Christian feeling, than it will without that influence? Will you not be able to do as much for your own comfort and that of those around you, if cheered by the hope that your sins are forgiven, and that God is your friend, as you are while oppressed with the consciousness that the wrath of God is abiding on you, and that you have no portion secured beyond the grave? But suppose that a due attention to the subject of religion were to interfere, in some degree, with your worldly interests and pursuits; which does Christ tell you to seek first? Which does your own conscience tell you, is most valuable and important? Would you think the man acted wisely, who, by busying himself to save a single dollar, should lose the opportunity of securing a large estate? And what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

III. *Interference of religion with favorite pursuits.*—Another excuse, often felt, though not very often expressed, is an apprehension that religion will render it necessary to abandon some favorite pleasure or pursuit. Most people, whose minds are enlightened by divine truth, understand very well what is, and what is not, consistent with Christian character. But so long as they make no pretensions to religion, they seem to feel no scruple in doing things, which they would be the first to condemn, if done by a professing Christian. They have many worldly pleasures, which they know it would be very unseemly for a disciple of Christ to indulge; or, they are governed by principles in their modes of doing business, which the Gospel plainly con-

demns; and as they have such a regard for consistency of character, that they cannot think of becoming Christians, without giving up whatever the spirit of the Gospel condemns, they are unwilling to be closely pressed upon the subject. They had rather keep it at a distance: and when an awakened conscience brings it home to them, they drive away their convictions, and close their eyes to the truth. But, my friend, religion will only prohibit you from doing that which is wrong; and will not conscience tell you that you are wishing for a continued license to sin? Does it not also tell you that a day of reckoning will come?—and can it be wise to go on swelling the amount that you will then have to settle?

In connexion with this, I would observe that pride is a very frequent obstacle, that prevents many from giving up their hearts to God. I presume there are those among my hearers, who will know what I mean. A feeling of shame would come over you, to have your thoughtless companions and associates look upon you, and know that you were thinking seriously about the welfare of your soul. And, therefore, if you have feelings on the subject, you try to conceal them, and will perhaps even deny that you have any. But is it best to be ashamed of Christ, when he has declared that of such he will be ashamed in the kingdom of his Father?

“Ashamed of Jesus?—yes you may,
When you’ve no sins to wash away;
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fear to quell—no soul to save.”

IV. *Inconsistencies of professing Christians.*—Another very common feeling, which reconciles the heart to a life of sin, is that many persons who profess religion, do not live consistently. My heart is pained within me when I think how grievously the Savior is often wounded in the house of his friends; how little conformity they exhibit to the character of Him, whom they profess to make their pattern, and how little concern they manifest for the eternal welfare of those, with whom they daily associate. And whether many of them have not deceived themselves with a name to live, while they are dead in sins, is a serious question, which must soon be decided.—But is the blessed Savior himself, on this account, any the less worthy of your love and confidence? Is this a reason why you should crucify him afresh by your unbelief? And especially, is this a reason why you should expose your immortal soul to eternal wretchedness and despair? Will you once think of offering it as an excuse, when you stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, that his professed disciples, whom you knew on earth, did not live as they ought? Or, will it help to dispel the gloom of your dark abode, to have associated with you, those whom you had seen numbered with the professing people of God? Look at the subject candidly, and tell me if you think this a good excuse.

V. *Conversion, the work of God.*—Perhaps you have a secret

feeling that it must be the work of God; he must work repentance and faith in you, or you cannot repent and believe; and this in such a sense as to free you from the responsibility and guilt of sin. Suppose a person were exposed to death, in a situation where he had a full view of his danger, and say that it was utterly out of his power to relieve himself, while there was an entire uncertainty whether relief would be afforded from any other quarter. Would he be able to maintain an air of indifference to his condition? Would he eat and drink with his usual relish through the day, and lie down and slumber quietly at night? Can any, then, really believe that they are in this fearful state, exposed to the eternal wrath of God, entirely unable to relieve themselves, and lying under a fearful uncertainty whether any other being will afford them help; while at the same time they appear wholly indifferent to their situation, and are perhaps amusing themselves with the trifles that surround them? Do they really believe their condition is such as is here supposed? Or, are they only wishing to quiet their consciences in sin, and avail themselves of this as a plausible excuse? Would you say that the more wicked a man is, the more excusable he is? Yourself being judge, a strong inclination to do wrong, furnishes no good excuse for doing wrong. There is one plain consideration that should satisfy us on this point. God holds man responsible for his conduct, and shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Will you think of urging your depraved inclination as an excuse at the bar of Jehovah? Certainly not. Then do not let it operate to keep you from accepting Christ now.

VI. *Influence of earthly friends.*—Others are prevented from accepting Christ by the influence of earthly friends. 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' But will Christ consider the influence of earthly friends a sufficient excuse for not accepting his invitation? Let his own words decide. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.' Yes, we are required to forsake wife and children, if need be, for the sake of being his disciples.—But some will plead the *opposition* of friends, if friends they can be called, as an obstacle to their embracing religion. But your friends cannot control your thoughts. They may abridge your privileges, but they cannot prevent your giving your heart to God, and loving him with your whole soul. And do not forget that your obligations to no earthly friend can bear any comparison with those which you are under to Christ.

VII. *Irksome duties.*—Others are in heart unwilling to become Christians, because they know there are duties connected with the profession of christianity, which appear to them exceedingly difficult and irksome. They therefore hesitate, and waver.—Do take up the subject in earnest. Some adopt a kind of half way course; indulge a hope that they have become the disciples of Christ, but decline the responsibility that belongs to a public profession of religion; and be-

cause they do not render themselves responsible to a body of their fellow-men, feel at liberty to omit those duties, which appear most forbidding to them. It is not my province to say that people never get to heaven in this way; but I do feel bound to repeat what Christ said when on earth;—*He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

VIII. *Want of conviction of sin.*—Others think they cannot accept the invitation of Christ, because they think they have not experienced such powerful convictions as they think needful, before it is proper for them to enjoy the consolations of religion. What would you think of the condemned criminal, who should refuse to comply with the term of offered pardon, though perfectly easy and just, because in his own view, he did not feel so penitent as he ought, for the offence he had committed? Do you feel sensible that you are guilty in the sight of God, that you are justly condemned by his law, that there is no way of escape but by the atoning blood of Christ? And do you believe that Christ stands ready and willing to save you? Why, then, do you not commit yourself entirely into his hands? Do you still say you have not felt your guilt so much as you ought? Think one moment. If God has been so kind as to show you your situation without that overwhelming sense of guilt, and those distressing stings of conscience, which some experience, is it a proper requital of his kindness to stand up and obstinately refuse to obey him? He commands you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do it now; and how strangely will it sound for you to plead at last, that you saw your danger, and perfectly understood what a remedy was provided, but you did not apply unto it, because you did not feel so much as you supposed you ought.

IX. *More convenient season.*—Others secretly think they shall have, some time or other, a more convenient season than the present. This is not expressed, but the heart feels it, and it betrays at once the fact, that the individual does not wish to be a servant of God. He postpones entering his service, as an evil which must be put off as long as possible, and submitted to at last, only when it can no longer be postponed. My hearer, is this your state of mind? You do not mean to die impenitent. You are not calculating on the horrors of a dying bed, uncheered by the presence of the Savior; but you are not ready to repent now. You expect a more convenient season. A more convenient season?—Why?—When your weight of guilt has accumulated, your heart hardened, your conscience seared, and the patience of God well nigh exhausted by your long delay? Do these things render it *more convenient* to effect a reconciliation with God?"

"To day attend, is wisdom's voice;
To-morrow, folly cries;—
And still to-morrow 'tis, when, oh,
To-day the sinner dies."

SERMON CCCXLVIII.

PRAYER A MEANS OF REVIVALS.

"O Lord, revive thy work."—Habakkuk, iii: 2.

THUS prayed the prophet Habakkuk for a revival of religion in ancient times. Thus should the people of God pray in every age, wherever religion languishes, and where there are souls to be saved. In the economy of redemption, God has made prayer a very important and indispensable means of revivals of religion.

"In order to offer that prayer which prevails with God,

I. Christians must *pray in humility*.

When they spread forth their supplicating hands to God, with the request that divine grace may enrich their hearts, that the consolations of religion may cheer their souls, that they may be useful in God's service; that Zion may be built up, sinners converted to God, and the whole earth filled with his knowledge and goodness: they should have a deep and affecting sense that they are utterly unworthy of such favors at the hand of God, utterly unworthy to be employed as the instruments of extending Christ's kingdom, and of saving souls from eternal ruin. They should feel that it is entirely of divine grace that they are permitted, by their prayers and exertions, to obtain these blessings for themselves or their fellow men. And this suggests,

II. That they should *pray in the name of Christ*.

They are so unworthy, so inefficient in themselves, so deserving of God's wrath, that they cannot hope that their prayers will be heard, or even that they can approach the Holy One, unless they come in the name of Him who has died for sinners, and who ever liveth to make intercession for his people. For Jesus has said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In the name of Christ then must they approach Jehovah, and through his merits expect every blessing which is bestowed in answer to prayer.

III. In prayer they must *seek the aid of God's word and spirit*.

In the Bible they may learn *what* they are to pray for, and *how* they are to pray. And they especially need the teachings of the Holy Spirit, by his gracious operations on the heart, that they may attain a devotional frame of mind, and a spirit of prayer, that they may be directed to pray for those things *which are agreeable to God's will*, that they may not hinder their own prayers by selfish motives, or by

being unprepared to receive the blessings for which they pray, and that they may be sustained in agonizing prayer, while they wrestle like Jacob, and prevail like Israel.

IV. They should *highly value those things for which they pray.*

Who would dare approach an earthly prince to request a mere trifle? They who approach the "King of Kings," should feel that they come with a weighty message; that their request is of high importance; that when they pray for the increased piety of themselves, or of other christians, and for the conversion of sinners, they are petitioning for favors which mortals could not purchase; that if their request is granted, the gain can be estimated by this only, that it is a charity worthy of a God of grace. They should feel this that they may be humble, fervent, and persevering in prayer, and that they may be prepared to receive, with gratitude, the gracious answer of their God.

V. They should be *very fervent in their prayers.*

Is it not true that the people of God often have so little feeling, ardor, and energy, so much coldness and indifference, so much unconcern whether God hears them or not, that their very prayer seems to invite a denial? Ah! this is not the way to reach heaven, and draw down blessings on perishing souls! "*The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.*" And christians who would offer this prayer for revivals, for the conversion of a sinner, must bring home the subject to their hearts in all its immense importance, till it lie a heavy burden on the soul; till their sympathies are enkindled, their anxieties excited, and their energies aroused; till they feel an awful and overwhelming responsibility resting upon them, as the instruments of salvation to others—that if faithful, souls will be saved, if unfaithful, *lost for ever!*—until they feel for perishing sinners that *restless agony of soul*, that shall go with them wherever they go, and abide with them wherever they abide; that shall steal away the refreshings of their food, and sleep, and all earthly enjoyments, that shall weigh down their spirits, and make them look into the bottomless pit, and behold sinners crowding upon its very verge!—that inexpressible agony which can find no relief, but in the throes and travailings of the second birth! When such prayers are offered, sinners are converted—God's work is revived:—"For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord?"

VI. They should *persevere in prayer.*

He who engages in an earthly enterprise in search of earthly good, is untiring in his pursuit till he gains the desire of his heart: and shall christians, who supplicate for heavenly, for eternal good, tire and faint? They should continue steadfastly and perseveringly in prayer, for God sometimes withholds for a season the gracious answer which he intends to give. He does it that his people may realize the value of what they ask, that they may more fully manifest their humility and fervor, their faith and submission, their determination to persevere,

and their zeal for his glory, and that they may be prepared to receive the answer of peace. When the answer is deferred, they should feel that their prayer may be hindered by something wrong, or something wanting, in their desires, or motives, or graces, or efforts; and while they should correct what is wrong, and supply what is lacking, they should persevere, though God seem to hear them not, still they should persevere till they gain their request; unless they have clear and unequivocal proof that they are praying for that which God intends not to bestow. How perseveringly did Elijah, on Mount Carmel, pray for rain, when his servant, sent to watch for the rising cloud, returned and said, "There is nothing." "Go again, *seven times*," said the holy seer, and *seven times* he poured out his soul in prayer, and obtained his request.

VII. In connection with their prayers, *christians should put forth those efforts through which the supplicated blessing is to be obtained.*

God works by means. Efforts are generally required by God of those who would obtain an answer to their prayers. Here many christians fail. Many pious parents, who feel and pray much for their children, it is feared, neglect those efforts which stand connected with the conversion of their children, and which would secure it, by the grace of God, if they were only put forth! Many who feel a deep anxiety, and pray fervently for a revival, still neglect the means of Gods appointment—means, which if faithfully used, would procure a revival! Christians should understand and feel that however deep their anxiety, and fervent their prayers, they have no right to expect a revival without using those means which God has placed in their power. This is a point, which I fear, many christians do not fully understand. And this, I apprehend, unfolds one of the great secrets why many apparently fervent and persevering prayers for revivals, receive no answer from God. These prayers are inefficient, because their corresponding efforts are not put forth. To give all the scripture illustrations of the connexion between prayer and effort, would require a volume.

VIII. In their prayers they should have a *supreme regard to the glory of God.*

The glory of God should be preferred to all earthly good, and they should seek the spiritual good of themselves and others, in connexion with this glory.

IX. They should pray in faith. They should believe and trust unwaveringly in the promises of God: so that—

"When his saints complain,
It shan't be said that praying breath,
Was ever spent in vain,"